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PP RUEHDE
DE RUEHIL #1698 1071103
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 171103Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8516
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 2265
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA PRIORITY 0112
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 4151
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1274
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2045
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 7029
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 8159
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0780
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 2998
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 5648
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 2076
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 0367
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2187
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 001698

SIPDIS

/////////COLLECTIVE ADDED/////////

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2017

TAGS: [PK](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: RED MOSQUE CALLS OFF NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 1688

[B](#). ISLAMABAD 1647

[C](#). AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Peter W. Bodde, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) On April 16, the administration of the Red Mosque (Lal Masjid) announced that it would suspend talks with the government, after mosque leaders accused the government of aerial surveillance and spraying unknown gases on the mosque. Red Mosque leader Maulana Ghazi told a news conference that, "spraying of gas and taking snaps of girl students with very low flight chopper on civil population is violation of the dialogue process as well as international laws." The mosque administration claims that several students fainted as a result of the gas and many others suffered from eye and skin irritations. There have been no confirmations of these injuries and area hospitals have not treated any gas victims. Maulana Ghazi said that Pakistan Muslim League President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain expressed ignorance of any helicopter actions. Police sources corroborate that, on April 15 and 16, helicopters flew over the mosque to assess the situation and to gauge the presence of weapons. On April 16, students and sympathizers of the Red Mosque staged a small demonstration and blocked the road outside the mosque to protest the surveillance and alleged gas usage.

[2](#). (C) Comment: Leaders of the Red Mosque have seized this incident as an excuse to stall talks and try to gain leverage in the face of growing public sentiment against the mosque, as evidenced by the recent MQM rally in Karachi (numbering 70,000- 100,000 people) and increasing media criticism. While the police have been using helicopters to monitor the situation inside the mosque and remain on standby in the vicinity, there is no repeat no evidence of any gas being released. Maulana Ghazi's statements are unlikely to gain him any ground in negotiations with Shujaat, and the government continues to anticipate a peaceful resolution to this conflict. End Comment.

